

WILD FOR LIFE FOUNDATION

Defending their Freedom and Saving Their Lives

TO: The Honorable Eduardo Garcia, Chair
The Honorable Megan Dahle, Vice Chair
Committee on Water, Parks and Wildlife
Legislative Office Building
1020 N Street, Room 160
Sacramento, CA 95814

FROM: Katia Louise, President, Founder and Executive Director
Wild For Life Foundation
12400 Ventura Blvd., #704
Studio City, CA 91604

RE: AJR 5 SUPPORT

Dear Chair Garcia, Vice-Chair Dahle and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of myself and the Wild For Life Foundation, (WFLF) we strongly urge support of AJR-5, introduced by Assemblywoman Rivas, for immediate action to affect the proposed moratorium on federal wild horse and burro roundups in the state of California.

My name is Katia Louise. I am the president, founder and executive director of the Wild For Life Foundation, a California based environmental nonprofit organization working in the U.S. to advance animal protection and wildlife conservation. The combination of my background as a lifelong horse woman, a credentialed educator and long career in wildlife conservation, animal rescue, and documentary film production have formed my perspective as shared with you below.

The first 12-years of my ongoing study of wild horses and burros is featured in WFLF's international award-winning film, SAVING AMERICA'S HORSES A NATION BETRAYED, which was released theatrically in 2012. Originally founded in 2008, for the protection of endangered species and the prevention of animal cruelty, WFLF's conservation work continues for the protection of wild horses and burros and to advocate their essential role as keystone Native contributors in the preservation of America's natural ecosystems. WFLF collaborates with scientists, researchers, educators, environmentalists, policymakers, and communities through research, scientific studies and boots-on-the-ground investigations to advance conservation initiatives.

WFLF's SAVING AMERICA'S HORSES project continues to bring international attention to key animal cruelty issues which impact California's wild horses and burros, including the illegal trafficking of BLM Mustangs for the purpose of slaughter which is in direct violation of California's Penal Code § 598c.

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In November 2018, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the BLM received stern warnings from California Attorney General Becerra to cease their intended sale of captured wild horses for slaughter. Despite the law and Becerra's firm warnings thousands of wild horses and burros have since been rounded up by the BLM and USFS at Twin Peaks and Modoc Forest, many of which were later sold and subsequently shipped across the border to slaughterhouses. Then-Assembly member Todd Gloria led significant efforts to stop those roundups, yet they continue. 2020 data from the BLM website shows that it seeks to remove 10,000 of the 12,000 horses and burros in California.

Putting an end to the roundups through the passage of AJR-5 is the most effective way to assure the protection of our precious wild horses and burros from this insidious criminal cruelty.

I have witnessed BLM roundups in person. During these roundups I have seen equines of all ages and sizes, both fit and unfit being chased indiscriminately by helicopter; they are forced to run for hours across miles of rough terrain, in extreme weather conditions without rest or water, and oftentimes are roped and dragged during the roundups. Bands of horses and burros are chased at high speeds into enclosed trap sites where horses often collide into the metal gates, and into one another. This egregiously cruel handling of horses and burros causes them tremendous suffering and pain.

Horses and burros sustain a multitude of injuries that occur during and as a direct result of the roundups including deep lacerations, abrasions, trachea injuries, and serious muscle skeletal injuries including fractures, broken necks, broken limbs, pelvis and spinal injuries. These injuries are ignored by roundup crew members. These horses and burros are then crammed into trailers where they suffer further injuries including head trauma, ruptured eye globes, and shipping fever (a painful condition caused by aggravated stress and a lack of rest, water and food), and many of the equines go down and are then trampled by the others. Many horses and burros suffer languishing deaths during and as a result of the roundups.

Worse yet, the resounding evidence of how we treat our horses and burros inside the U.S. once they are designated as food animals is chilling. They are systematically beaten, dragged, whipped, crammed into double deck cattle trailers and hauled for days without food, water or rest; many are purposely blinded to force them to succumb to defeat.

Currently, the BLM is seeking to completely remove burros in Inyo county from three herds by reducing the allowable numbers from nearly 1800 to zero. These plans do not reflect the integral role the equids play in our fire-ravaged lands, and are incongruent with California's biodiversity action plan, which Governor Newsom prioritized last year with [Executive Order N-82-20](#), launching the [California Biodiversity Collaborative](#).

The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, through our tax dollars, provides public lands and protection for wild horses and burros. The law states that "It is the policy of Congress

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that wild free-roaming horses and burros shall be protected from capture, branding, harassment, or death; and to accomplish this they are to be considered in the area where presently found, as an integral part of the natural system of the public lands.” The 1971 act, in fact, directs the BLM to change their mindset from treating wild horses as feral and instead to protect them.

When allowed to roam as nature intended, wild horses and burros’ droppings help to replenish the soils, their digestive system produces a perfect fertilizer, and they pass along seeds that build up plant life. They complement the rangelands and wildlife in many ways. (SAVING AMERICA’S HORSES, A NATION BETRAYED). In other parts of the world, such as the United Kingdom, governments, scientists, environmental agencies and groups including the Wildwood Trust, are successfully rejuvenating rangelands through the return of wild equids in conservation grazing.

AJR 5 recognizes the 50th anniversary of the [Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act](#), and calls for a return to the original provisions, which have eroded over time from changes to Interior budgets passed by Congress. Current plans of the BLM and USFS are to excessively reduce the wild horse and burro herds to illegally low, genetically nonviable levels rather than allowing them to harmoniously exist and stabilize in accord with the true meaning and intent of the 1971 Act. Most Americans see these majestic creatures as living symbols of freedom and America’s enduring spirit.

It is the responsibility of California to uphold within the state, the federal laws that protect all of California, especially when those laws are compromised. For this reason, and those aforementioned, we strongly urge you to pass AJR 5 to end the wild horse and burro roundups in California.

Respectfully,

Katia Louise

Katia Louise, President
Wild For Life Foundation

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